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ABSTRACT

Between fiscal years 1985-86 and 1990-91 the Swedish government earmarked funding for cultural projects. The aims were both to increase the element of culture in schoolwork and to establish and strengthen ties between school and cultural life outside school. Local municipalities could apply for funding for projects initiatiated by the schools. Funding was to support new projects and was earmarked for direct activities in the schools. County school boards reported to Sweden's National School Board on projects that won funding. The board's Information and Documentation Section maintained a database of funded projects. The activities that obtained funding were diverse--music, drama, film, and local history. Teachers and students with interests in cultural activities won greater status as a result of the projects. Teachers and students alike have found schoolwork more meaningful and enjoyable, and the projects have brought about more active, creative ways of working. To be successful, such projects must be a natural part of schoolwork. (SG)

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CONTRIBUTION OF EDUCATION TO CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

"Culture in School: A development project 1985-1991"

by

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Culture in School

A development project 1985 - 1991

Concepts of culture

A quatation from Bengt Göransson, Secretary of State with special responsibility for culture and primary education and one of the initiators of the development project "Culture in School", serves to throw some light on the general view of cultural activities in School.

"It is vital that all children and young people are given the opportunity at a very early stage in their lives to aquire a share of what we call our cultural heritage or more precisely our common cultural ground"

The combined responsibility for both school and culture opened new opportunities for development and by investing in a steady stream of support to cultural activities in schools it led to the hope that culture could be given a stronger standing in schoolwork.

Before going into the project in greater detail it is necessary to mention some of the background factors which played an important role in the formation of the cultural effort.

During the 1970s the Department of Education set up a special group to work with children's culture. The group presented proposals in the fields of children's culture and a number of ideas for projects were given financial support by the National Council for the Arts. Unfortunately the work done covered a fairly wide spectrum of projects and became almost unmanageable. When the money ran out the projects closed down.

The current national curriculum - Lgr 80 - came into force in 1982/83. Central to the curriculum is the view of the pupil's development as an integrated whole - intellectually, socially and mentally. Pupils are active, creative human beings.

School life and cultural life are tightly interwoven in the national curriculum. An important insight behind this integration is the knowledge that many children grow up in a sterile cultural environment. A failure to encounter cultural life in school means that the chance of encountering culture later in life is minimal.

We live in the age of mass media with a tremendous supply of popular culture. This puts even greater demands on the role played by the school in our cultural lives. School must provide the pupil with a greater preparedness to meet different forms of cultural expression.

The combination of experience of previous projects, the organisation of school life and the role played by interested teachers led naturally to the decision to stimulate cooperation between school life and cultural activities.

Development Work

Between the financial years 1985/86 and 1990/91 the government earmarked specific subsidies for cultural projects. The aim was twofold; to increase and deepen the element of culture in schoolwork and secondly to establish and strengthen contacts between school and cultural life outside school.

The government, concerned to avoid previous mistakes, laid down very concrete guidelines to be followed in developing worthwhile contacts between school and artists, writers etc as well as developing contacts between school boards and municipal art's committees. There was moreover an ambition to broaden slowly but surely the scope of cultural activities within the framework of regular school work.

The local municipality could apply for funding to finance projects at the initiative of the schools. This arrangement was designed to stimulate a coordination of the resources available in the local community.

The funds were aimed at increasing and deepening cultural activities in schools. They were designed to promote bridge-building between school and cultural life. Writers, artists, craftsmen, dance and drama teachers, theater and music groups as well as museums could work together with teachers and pupils for longer or shorter periods of time.

The aim of the project was to stimulate the creation of new types of activity and not to finance already existing projects. What is considered new differs from school to school. Culture in this sense of the term meant accepted forms of cultural activity and the aim at the county level was to ensure a wide variety of forms. In the initial stages the directives on established forms were interpreted as dealing only with more refined forms of cultural expression but the term culture was expanded to include "popular culture".

The funding was earmarked for direct activities in schools and was not available for planning work or evaluation surveys conducted by the county school board or by the municipal authorities. The funds could not be used for more general projects in a county as a whole. The cultural projects had to be firmly tied to one or more schools.

Projects where municipalities contributed to the funding were given priority by the county school boards. It was seen as reasonable that such projects would run a better chance of becoming a natural part of the activities in the schools in question.

The efforts put into the project met with a genuine response. "Culture promotes culture". The small project in the classroom for all the pupils and the larger project in no way excluded one another.

Evaluation and Report

In order to ensure a follow-up of the projects the county school board reported to the National School Board on projects which had been granted support. All in all some 7000 projects were run in different parts of the country.

The number was highly impressive in view of the relatively moderate sum of money invested in the project - some 16 million SEK per year. The funds were distributed by the county school boards to the different grades in primary schools, to secondary high schools and to special schools. A smaller amount of funding was controlled directly by the government and used for methodological developments and larger projects.

Pilot study for culture in school projects

At the start of the project it was decided to establish cooperation with the Information and Documentation Section of the National School Board. The aim was to create a database which could be used in the evaluation of cultural projects: to facilitate the exchange of experience, to make basic patterns visible, patterns reflected in plurality, in different forms of artistic expression, in the spread of activities, in cooperation and thereby be able to judge the results of specific efforts. The professional competence of the Information and Documentation Section in structuring databases could be exploited effectively in this cooperation.

As it turned out the cooperation between the representatives for various subjects and the database constructors proved very fruitful and led to two results.

The first result was that the structure of the database held for the whole six year trial period. This allowed for comparisons between the various years. The database had many different search entry points and controlled subject descriptors. The close and continuous cooperation between those responsible for evaluation and those responsible for the database proved critically important in the choice of subject descriptors. Every project was registered as it came up and all in all some 7000 projects were monitored. This substantional amount of material could be used to extract results and experiences and view them from different angles.

The second result of cooperative effort was that Information and Documentation Section marketed the database together with a database for literature. This second database was already available for other users and with this cooperation schools, lecturers and teachers' training colleges and others working in different fields of culture were now given access to the database. Individual teachers and schools could now obtain ideas and tips on what to work with etc while those working in different fields of culture could now see how their own fields of interest were represented.

Contents

The various cultural projects have covered different fields such as music, drama, theater, literature, dance, film and other media, pictorial art, handicrafts and local cultural history groups. Many of the projects have had a highly positive effect on cultural life by stimulating contacts between local artists and the cultural institutions and associations in the areas where they live. A conscious effort has been made to draw attention to fields of cultural activity neglected in schools such as dance, film, local cultural history associations and museums. Many projects covered more than one field of artistic expression. Musicals with dancing included in the performance were not unusual in the choice of form for expression. Intercultural projects also worked with many different forms of expression. The cultural projects bear witness to a broad range of interests and to a richness of imagination.

Results

The main importance of the effort to promote culture in schools lies in the increase in cultural activities arranged by schools and in the increased opportunities for pupils to express themselves in artistic and creative forms. One point mentioned again and again was that the development project had de facto improved the standing of pupils and teachers with an interest in cultural activities. It became legitimate to work with cultural activities. The perhaps most substantial gain following from the years devoted to the project, is the change in attitude which now recognises that culture must be given more room in the everyday work of schools. Hopefully this change will lead to positive results in the long term.

The efforts put into Culture in School have provided other local development projects with a model to build on and with a source of inspiration. Both teachers and pupils have found schoolwork more meaningful and enjoyable and the projects have been used to introduce more active and more creative ways of working. Cooperation with artists has contributed in large part to this new perspective. The projects have also had an effect on the social climate in schools.

Conclusions

An important starting point for cultural activities in schools is that they must be a natural part of school work. Individual pupils must be given the opportunity to take part in creative activities from pre-school up to senior high school level. All school subjects must be linked to cultural activities and especially those subjects aimed at developing the pupils ability of self expression and communication, Swedish, art, music and handicrafts.

One strong element in the project was the close link to the headmasters' management areas / school units. The small scale gave those involved the feeling that they could grasp the project as a whole and that the project need not be something pretentious. These feelings contributed to the success of the development project.

Cooperation

The government bill of 1988/89:4 - The Management and Development of Schools - led to stage two of the project. It was now a question of more generally and systematically spreading ideas and initiatives which could be rooted in the practical everyday work of individual schools and also in local communities.

This development led to increased cooperation between local school boards and municipal arts' committees. It is vital that local communities make the most of their resources. Among the resources available are their facilities in the form of premises, people including teachers, artists and performers as well as institutions, pupils and not least of all time.

Culture in school helped encourage municipalities to take stock of their existing resources both in schools and in local cultural life. Those municipalities which drew up action programs for cultural activities among children and young people have found it easier to establish cooperation between different sectors. Schools have taken for granted the value of cooperation between municipal institutions such as the municipal school of music, the local library and so on. However even local associations and individual artists, writers etc are important resources for schools. Some municipalities have created resource centres with dance, drama and media teachers and with other artists writers etc involved in the work of the centres. This contributes to an ongoing and conscious cooperation both inside and outside school as well as the opportunity for further education of teachers.

Experience points to the need for a more stable cooperation / mutual assistance both at the regional and at the local levels with the development of joint advisory bodies for the coordination of resources and support. Municipal authorities should be clear about their ambitions for school and cultural activities if Culture in School is to win general support. The plan for schools adopted by the council and the local action program for each school should it was pointed out, deal with these express ambitions.

The Contribution of Central Government

The efforts of central authorities in working with Culture in School were concentrated to the development of models and methods and to the further education of teachers, artists, writers and those working in the arts. Film and dance were given special consideration. The number of municipalities now providing "Dance in Schools" has risen from 8 to 40. The interest in dance has developed gradually and municipalities can now receive support from the National Arts Council and the council's full time dance teachers.

Over and above the special funds earmarked for the National Concert Company, the National Theater Company and the National Exhibition Company further funding was provided to allow these organisations the resources needed to run projects which the municipalities and schools were unable to manage on their own. These projects were part of the development of new methods and provided an extra stimulus to schools and municipalities. "*The Dreamtrain - Tracking the*

Tracks" is an exampe of cooperation between the three National bodies and SJ, the national railway company. In order to get the train to visit a town the municipality had to arrange and finance a week of cultural activities for pupils in the schools. Some 40 municipalities in the southern and central regions of Sweden, 2500 pupils in junior high and 10 000 adults have so far been in contact with the project. During the school year 1992/93 the train will visit 20 municipalities in the north of Sweden. In order to spread the experience of working with the project, television programmes were produced under the direction of School Radio. This type of activity will continue to be in demand also in the future.

Decentralisation

As from 1991/92 the funding for Culture in School will be included in the total school grant paid by the state to local government. The trend is towards greater decentralisation in schooling and increased responsibility for local government. One important step towards this new system has been the dismantling of the National School Board and the County School Boards. The new central authority - The School Council - works mainly with national evaluation tests and development projects. There are still separate departments of state for school and culture.

Results

The development work carried out in Culture and School has led to the introduction of regular features into school work, eg the opportunity to create specific profiles involving different art forms - music, pictorial representation - and also the creation of schools of culture - dance, drama and music as well as art and form classes. The municipal school of music can include art, dance and drama. Municipalities now set up centres for cultural resources and artists, writers, teachers from the school of music and so on become resources in teaching.

In the interdepartmental report "*The Cultural Program for Children and Young People*" which the departments of Civil Affairs, of Education and Social Security presented in August 1991 the efforts put into developing new activities were given extensive attention and recommended to relevant authorities. The report was commissioned in order to provide inspiration and support for those who work with children and young people. The Swedish Federation of Municipal Councils, an organisation for cooperation/coordination between municipalities has developed the work of the project in a series of seminars and publications.

Changes

We now face extensive changes both in primary and in senior secondary schools. The changes involve adapting the school system to greater local responsibility and to different political standpoints adopted by the former Social Democratic government and the current Conservative-Centre-Liberal government.

In September 1992 the government appointed committee for the National Curriculum will present its proposals for a new national curriculum for obligatory

schooling in accordance with special directives laid down by the Ministry of Education. This work has been carried out parallel to a report on a new system for grades. The new primary school will in all probability be less uniform and will include possibilities for individual choice and parental influence. Among the areas which are regarded as especially important are language development - Swedish as well as foreign languages and the cultural heritage in the broadest sense of the term. Among the more central areas of knowledge are the environment, internationalisation and the media.

The overall drive is directed at increasing elements of culture in work with children and young people and to providing greater scope for the interests of children and young people in the field of cultural activities. Important features include greater competence in cultural questions on the part of those responsible for children and young people and greater cooperation between cultural institutions, voluntary associations, childcare centres and schools. Examples of what is being done include support for cultural work in films, working grants for artists taking part in cultural educational activities, support for different types of cultural schools and support for improved international contacts.

Conclusion

"*Culture in School*" is still an open question but the concluding remarks of the framework report should still hold good.

"In a school for everyone the cultural expressions of the pupils should be encouraged to develop and given due attention. The efforts put into this cultural project have contributed to the formation of knowledgeable "consumers" and "producers" of culture. The encouter between school life and cultural life allows the pupil to work with the means of artistic expression rather than playing the role of the passive consumer of culture. It is important that pupils be allowed to use their own forms of self expression but also that they establish a relation to culture which thay can have with them for the rest of their lives.

The efforts put into culture in school provide the pupils with even more opportunities to develop by means of active creative work, their own personal creativity and identity both now and in the future, to both demand and influence the supply of culture in society.

The school is a cultural centre for every pupil.